

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF TAGORE

The educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore is based on his general philosophy related to life and the experience which he acquired from the prevailing educational institutions and Nature. He was dissatisfied with the existing system of education and he developed an aversion for it. He considered the then educational institutions as, "Educational factories, lifeless, colourless, disassociated from the context of the universe, within bare white walls, staring like eye balls of the dead. This is so because it ignored our own customs, traditions, conventions, manners, ideologies, morals and spirituality. It provided information and knowledge for the intellectual growth and it neglected the aspects of human growth". He further says, "Education is a permanent part

of the venture of human life. Educational institution is like hospital where a treatment is administered to cure the ignorance of students and it is the place for the natural expression of their mind”.

Harmony with all things: Tagore believed that the real education is that which makes one's life in harmony with all existence. Hence, the primary object of an educational institution is to bring the child in perfect tune with the symphony of response between life and world and to find the balance of their harmony. According to him, “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence”. He interpreted the harmony in three ways, that is, harmony with Nature, harmony with human surrounding and harmony in international relations. His educational philosophy is based on four fundamentals namely, naturalism, humanism, internationalism and idealism. On the basis of these philosophies, Tagore accounted the functions of education. They enable us to realise that “to live as a man is great, requiring profound philosophy for its ideals, poetry for its expression and heroism for its conduct”.

Freedom: Tagore stressed on the freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will for spontaneous self-expression of emotional outbursts of feelings, impulses and instincts. He was in favour of giving maximum freedom to children so that they would be like the kite as it soars in the vast sky. According to him, “Education has its only meaning and objects in freedom—freedom from ignorance about the laws of universe and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world”. As a naturalist, Tagore advocated freedom for children and he was in favour of natural surroundings.

Creative self-expression: Tagore condemned the excessive dominance of intellectualism in education. He felt that mere intellectual development cannot bring about an all-round personality development. Therefore, education should take place through some activities and direct experiences for promoting creative self-expression. He said, “Hand work and arts are the spontaneous overflow of our deeper nature and spiritual significance”. Tagore recommended the teaching of leather work, art, craft, music, drama, drawing, painting, dancing and other creative pursuits for the creative self-expression of the students.

Active communication with Nature and man: Tagore emphasised that the child should be brought up in direct contact with Nature. He insisted that education should be imparted in natural surroundings with all its beauty, colours, sounds and forms so that the child may understand Nature and its relation to human life. According to him, Nature is the manuscript of God. There is a spiritual relationship between Nature and God, Nature and man and hence man and God. Nature provides the child with satisfaction of mind and peace of soul which are essential for his spontaneous development and natural growth. Thus, his concept of naturalism stands for love and harmony with all

that exists in nature. He declared, "We should have, the gift to be natural with Nature and human with human society". In fact, he wanted the child to be educated in the laps of Nature far away from towns and provided opportunities for social contacts in order to develop a sense of social service. Next to Nature, the child should be brought into touch with the stream of social contacts that is communion of man with man.

Internationalism: Tagore stood for the unity of mankind. He believed in unity in the diversity of races and nations. He translated his idea of harmonious development of the human race into Vishwa Bharathi, an international university. This university still remains the symbol of world culture, international understanding and broad humanism. According to Tagore, "Vishwa Bharathi acknowledges India's obligation to offer to others the hospitality of her best culture and India's right to accept from others their best". The main ideals of Viswa Bharathi, the fourth central university, are "to establish intimate relationship between the East and the West, to promote inter-cultural, inter-social understanding and to strive for the unification of mankind". Ours is the goal of building a greater India in which Hindu, Muslim and Christian, the dark-skinned and the white-skinned will all find their place.